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EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAININGS ON RABBIT PRODUCTION IN KERALA, INDIA- A FARMER PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The study specifically explores the perceptions of rabbit farmers of the state on trainings conducted by various agencies in this sector. A list of rabbit farmers in the state was prepared in consultation with officials of the Animal Husbandry Department, Veterinary College, Kudumbasree and other associated agencies. Appropriate sampling methods were used to select 90 rabbit farmers from various parts of the state and data were collected using a pretested interview schedule on the rabbit farmers' premises. From the list three districts with the highest number of rabbit farmers reported (designated as 'higher districts') viz. Thiruvananthapuram, Idukki and Wayanad were selected. Proportionate stratified random sampling with equal allocation was used to select 30 farmers from each district so that a total of 90 rabbit farmers were selected from these three districts. From among the districts with lesser number of farmers reported (designated as 'lower districts'), there were no districts with a minimum of 30 farmers, hence all the farmers identified in four districts viz. Thrissur (20), Kottayam (20) , Kannur (14) and Kozhikode (12) were selected. Nearly half of the small rabbit farmers in the lower districts had not received any training and the same is true for nearly two thirds of the small farmers in the higher districts. Similar findings were observed among the medium rabbit farmers of both the zones. The State Poverty Eradication Mission sponsored Kudumbasree was the most frequently accessed place of training for small farmers in both the lower and higher districts. However, among medium farmers both in the higher as well as lower districts the Animal Husbandry Department was the most frequently accessed place of training. Out of the 24 small farmers in the lower districts who had received training, 22 farmers (91.67%) perceived the training attended as effective. Similar findings were observed among all the rabbit farmers of the higher districts as well.

INTRODUCTION

Although backyard rabbit rearing has been practiced in the villages of Kerala for a few decades, scientific rabbit rearing is a relatively new concept in the state. In recent years there has been a rising awareness on broiler rabbit production as a means of augmenting family income. In spite of the above mentioned favorable factors, this enterprise is also affected with many constraints. In spite of the above mentioned favorable factors, this enterprise is also affected with many constraints. Some of the widely recognized constraints are lack of reputed breeders, quality feed, marketing facilities and technical support. Another important reason for the failure of many rabbit rearing programmesis that the purebred temperate types fail to perform optimally under tropical conditions. Trainings are an important tool used by extension practitioners to bring about transformation in the agricultural as well as animal production systems. Lindeman (1926) while laying the foundations for a systematic theory on adult learning observed that the learning for adults was life centred and through their life situations. In conventional education the student is required to adjust himself to an established curriculum; in adult education the curriculum is built around the students' needs and interests

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This paper specifically explores the perception of rabbit farmers of Kerala about trainings in this sector.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A list of rabbit farmers in the state was prepared in consultation with officials of the Animal Husbandry Department, Veterinary College, Kudumbasree and other associated agencies. From the list three districts with the highest number of rabbit farmers reported (designated as 'higher districts') *viz.* Thiruvananthapuram, Idukki and Wayanadwere selected. Proportionate stratified random sampling with equal allocation was used to select 30 farmers from each district so that a total of 90 rabbit farmers were selected from these three districts. From among the districts with lesser number of farmers reported (designated as 'lower districts'), there were no districts with a minimum of 30 farmers, hence all the farmers identified in four districts *viz.* Thrissur (20), Kottayam (20) , Kannur (14) and Kozhikode (12) were selected. The selected rabbit units were grouped into three categories based on the number of breedable female rabbits as Small units being those with 1-10 rabbits, medium units with 11 to 50 rabbits and large units those with more than 50 rabbits.

The number of rabbit farms or units included in the three categories of the two district groups is shown below.

District group	Category			Total
	Small	Medium	Large	
Lower districts	51	14	1	66
Higher districts	77	11	2	90

RESULTS

a. Trainings received

Nearly half of the small rabbit farmers in the lower districts had not received any training and the same is true for nearly two thirds of the small farmers in the higher districts. Similar findings were observed among the medium rabbit farmers of both the zones. So also, the lone large farmer in the lower districts had not received any training. Periodic training and learning new skills is a prerequisite to any entrepreneurial venture. The findings of this study shed light on the need for more efforts in this direction.

Table 1. Distribution of respondentsbased on trainings received or not

	Category of farmers	Trained		Not trained	
		f	%	f	%
Lower districts	Small n =51	24	47.1	27	52.9
	Medium n =14	7	50	7	50
	Large n =1	0	0	1	100
Higher districts	Small n=77	29	37.7	48	62.3
	Medium n =11	5	45.5	6	54.5
	Large n =2	1	50	1	50

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b. Perceived training effectiveness

Out of the 24 small farmers in the lower districts who had received training, 22 farmers (91.67%) perceived the training attended as effective. Similar findings were observed among all the rabbit farmers of the higher districts as well.

Table 2. Distribution of respondentsbased on perceived training effectiveness

	Category of farmers	Perceived training effectiveness			
		Effective		Not effective	
		f	%	f	%
Lower districts	Small n =24	22	91.7	2	8.3
	Medium n =7	6	85.7	1	14.3
	Large n =0	0	0	0	0
Higher districts	Small n=29	27	93.1	2	6.9
	Medium n =5	5	100	0	0
	Large n =1	1	100	0	0

c. Places of training

Farmer trainings have been reported to take place most often outside formal learning institutions (Sajeev, 2012). This was the case also in the present study where the State Poverty Eradication Mission sponsored Kudumbasree was the most frequently accessed place of training for small farmers in both the lower and higher districts. However, among medium farmers both in the higher as well as lower districts the Animal Husbandry Department was the most frequently accessed place of training.It differs from education in schools because it is geared towards adult learning.

Table 3. Distribution of respondentsbased on places of training

	Category of farmers	Places of training											
		AHD		NGO		Kudumbasree		Panchayat		Other		KAU	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Lower districts	Small n =24	5	20.8	0	0	18	75	1	4.2	0	0	0	0
	Medium n =7	4	57.1	0	0	2	28.6	0	0	0	0	1	14.3
	Large n =0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Higher districts	Small n =29	7	24.0	0	0	19	65.5	1	3.5	1	3.5	1	3.5
	Medium n =5	3	60	0	0	2	40	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Large n =1	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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CONCLUSIONS

Trainings remain an important tool for optimizing productivity on small holder livelihood systems in animal husbandry as well as agriculture. Besides serving as points of transfer of technology, trainings are also important points of feedback from the farming community for continual technology improvement. The findings of the study shed light on the need to improve the availability of trainings for rabbit farmers of both the higher as well as the lower districts.

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